

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 02144 151029Z

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR INFO ADDEES

EE.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MPOL, NATO, IT

SUBJECT: TERMINATION HOMEPORTING USS PIEDMONT

REFS: A. STATE 026968

B. USDAO 241340Z SEPT 1974

C. CNO 202045Z SEPT 1974

1. BEFORE PROCEEDING TO EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WITHDRAWING HOME-
PORTING OF DESTROYER TENDER AT NAPLES, EMBASSY WISHES MAKE
CERTAIN WASHINGTON AWARE OF SOME OF POSSIBLE RAMIFICATIONS.

2. EMBASSY NOT IN A POSITION TO QUESTION RATIONALE FOR TERMI-
NATION HOMEPORTING OF TENDER. IN ANY EVENT, HOWEVER, WE SHOULD
BE IN A POSITION TO PROVIDE THE ITALIANS WITH A STRONGER
REASONING THAN THE SINGLE ARGUMENT OF EFFICIENCY OR ECONOMY
WHICH APPARENTLY LAY BEHIND INITIATIVE TO ESTABLISH THE HOMEPORT
IN THE FIRST INSTANCE. IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT ITALIANS,
PARTICULARLY NON-EXPERTS IN MFA AND AMONG POLITICIANS, WILL FIND
A PARALLEL BETWEEN PIEDMONT IN NAPLES AND THE GILMORE IN LA
MADDALENA. THE GOI WILL LIKELY SEE AN ANOMALY IN A CLAIM THAT
HOMEPORTING THE GILMORE IS EFFICIENT OR ECONOMIC WHILE HOME-

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 ROME 02144 151029Z

PORTING PIEDMONT IS NOT. WITH THE BIA AMENDMENT TO COVER

SHORE-BASED PERSONNEL AT LA MADDALENA STILL IN THE ITALIAN BUREAUCRATIC LIMBO, WE MAY WELL HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO STRENGTHEN OUR ARGUMENT FOR THE GILMORE. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY FURTHER GUIDANCE IN THIS REGARD THAT THE DEPARTMENT CAN PROVIDE. FOLLOWING ARE SOME ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS THAT COME TO MIND:

A. ACTION LIKELY IRREVOCABLE. GIVEN PRESENT RELUCTANCE OF THE GOI TO OFFER HOSPITALITY TO NEW U.S. MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN ITALY COMPARED WITH THE ALMOST AUTOMATIC COOPERATION OF THE PAST, IT IS NOT LIKELY WE WOULD BE ABLE OBTAIN CONCURRENCE FOR FUTURE HOMEPORTING IF IT IS EVENTUALLY DECIDED TO REPLACE THE PIEDMONT WITH A SIMILAR OR DIFFERENT VESSEL. GROWING CONGESTION OF NAPLES HARBOR FURTHER MILITATES AGAINST THAT POSSIBILITY. PIEDMONT NOW HAS A PERMANENTLY ASSIGNED BERTH WHICH WILL PROBABLY BE LOST WITH A FORMAL END TO HOMEPORTING STATUS. GIVEN CONTINUING DIFFICULTY IN FINDING BERTHING SPACE AT NAPLES, A DEPLOYED TENDER COULD FACE THAT PROBLEM WHENEVER IT WISHED USE NAPLES. (THERE IS A CONTINUING DILEMMA FOR THE ITALIANS POSED BY OUR PRESENCE IN NAPLES. ON THE ONE HAND THEY WOULD BE GREATLY RELIEVED BY OUR DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE PORT. OUR PRESENCE COMPLICATES ALREADY UNWIELDY PORT ACTIVITIES. WE OCCUPY VALUABLE REAL ESTATE. WE PRESENT POLITICAL PROBLEMS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOI WOULD VIEW ANY SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN THAT PRESENCE AS A WEAKENING OF OUR CONTRIBUTION TO SOUTHERN FLANK SECURITY.)

B. PORT CALLS OF NPW'S HAVE BEEN TIED BY ITALIANS TO PRESENCE OF A TENDER. REFS B AND C REFER TO THE APPARENTLY LESS THAN FORMAL CONDITION ESTABLISHED BY THE ITALIAN NAVY, IN CONTEXT OF EMERGENCY PLAN, REQUIRING PRESENCE OF A SUPPORT SHIP IN ORDER PERMIT BERTHING OF NPW'S. THIS CONDITION WE UNDERSTAND TO BE LARGELY COSMETIC (THOUGH ITALIAN NAVY MAY NOT SO UNDERSTAND IT) BUT WE MUST BE PREPARED TO HAVE IT SURFACE MORE URGENTLY WHEN NO SUPPORT VESSEL IS AVAILABLE IN PORT. THE ISSUE WILL BE COMPOUNDED IF PLANNING PROCEEDS TO BRING NUCLEAR POWERED SURFACE VESSELS TO ITALY.

C. DEPARTURE OF PIEDMONT AND ASSOCIATED DEPENDENTS WILL AMOUNT TO SOME REDUCTION IN THE U.S. PRESENCE IN NAPLES. QUESTION COULD ARISE AS TO WHETHER SIZE AND TEMPO OF U.S. NAVAL

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 ROME 02144 151029Z

SUPPORT ACTIVITY WILL NOT NEED REEXAMINATION. THERE ARE, WE HEAR, PLANS FOR OTHER REDUCTIONS IN THE NAPLES AREA (SUCH AS TRANSFER OF A PATROL SQUADRON TO SIGONELLA). LOWERING THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT ACTIVITIES WILL INEVITABLY LEAD TO A REDUCTION IN ITALIAN NATIONAL EMPLOYEES. DEPARTMENT IS AWARE SENSITIVITY OF GOI TO THIS SUBJECT AND STRONG REACTIONS WE CAN EXPECT FROM UNIONS.

3. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE TENDER, NOW REPRESENTED BY THE PIEDMONT, WOULD WITH THE TERMINATION OF HOMEPORTING BE DEPLOYED TO THE MEDITERRANEAN ON A ROTATIONAL BASIS. WE SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT THE TENDER WOULD LIKELY USE NAPLES WITH ALMOST AS MUCH FREQUENCY AND FOR NEARLY AS LONG PERIODS AS IS NOW THE CASE WITH A HOMEPORTED TENDER. WE REALIZE THERE MAY BE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES TO HOMEPORTING (OBLIGATIONS TO DEPENDENTS, FOR EXAMPLE) OF WHICH WE ARE NOT FULLY AWARE. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE IT MAY BE USEFUL TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF MAINTAINING THE AGREEMENT TO HOMEPORT A TENDER AT NAPLES AGAINST ANY FUTURE CHANGES OF IMPERATIVES. THIS, IF FEASIBLE, WOULD AVOID MANY OF THE PROBLEMS WE FORESEE WHILE ASSURING A CONTINUING ARRANGEMENT IN NAPLES TO FACILITATE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE TENDER. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES WE COULD ELECT EITHER TO SAY NOTHING TO THE ITALIANS OR SIMPLY INFORM THE GOI OF OUR INTENTION TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TENDER DURING 1976. VOLPE

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